

MRS. BEECHER—BY ONE WHO KNEW HER AND LIVED WITH HER.

Harriet B. Beecher Writes of Her Many Excellent Traits.



AT 18.

From the original photograph taken in Brooklyn, 1830. Mrs. Beecher took in sewing and earned the money to pay for the photograph and send it to her sweetheart.

WHAT can American women learn from Mrs. Beecher's life? Many things. First of all, truth. Absolute, sincere, never varying truth. Next, charity; and next, industry.

Faith she had, too, simple, unshaken faith. And good humor was hers, and with all these things Mrs. Beecher was a woman with "faculty," an American woman of the good old-fashioned sort. She could cook and sew, and lead a missionary meeting, and nurse a sick baby, and entertain brilliant people; and she could be a great man's wife and not be spoiled by it.

I lived in the house with Mrs. Beecher for nearly twenty years, and I never saw her vexed without reason, and I don't believe she knew what the word "nag" meant. Mrs. Beecher kept bores away from her husband, and she made him remember his engagements. She answered his letters, and she kept a quiet home for him.

Throughout her life, and at her very death hour, she set an example of sturdy simplicity and direct common sense to all who knew her.

She was born eighty-five years ago in a small village in Massachusetts. Her father a noted physician, owned and carried on a large farm near this town, where his ten children grew to manhood and womanhood surrounded by all that would tend to make them useful, patriotic citizens.

Mrs. Beecher was a decided beauty, tall, of fine presence, with singular high-bred features, and her miniatures of those days portray her a most fascinating woman. She was her mother's right hand in the household. She married her husband while he was a young, inexperienced missionary in the then far West, and endured the hardships of an early settler's life by his side with great courage and youthful pride.

When it seemed best on account of ill-health to move East for a change of air, and her husband was made pastor of Plymouth Church, Mrs. Beecher was his chief helper. It was through her efforts that he was enabled to accomplish the immense amount of work which came upon him.

The influence of the early New England training stayed by Mrs. Beecher throughout her active, rushing life, where she found needs of industry,

thrift and economy. By all this valuable training she was able to carry along the cares and anxieties of a famous minister's wife, for no such word as fail was ever heard of in her vocabulary.

Mrs. Beecher's interest in home life everywhere was a beautiful trait in her character, as her writings testify.

A little mother in the midst of her children always carried her back to her own young motherhood days, and appealed to her love and interest in babies and the atmosphere of young love.

Her early life in the city of Brooklyn in connection with Plymouth Church work was largely among the poor, giving from her abundance of sympathy and love to the suffering.

After her husband's correspondence became so large and wearisome, she took systematic charge of it, relieving him almost entirely of the burden, also shielding him from the pressure of callers and interruptions of various kinds which were constantly at his door, besides keeping an eye on the important outstanding engagements from day to day.

All through the discouraging anti-slavery days, when Mr. Beecher and Mrs. Stowe were working heart and soul for the relief of the colored people, this devoted wife stood near and made it easy for the noble preacher

to give his spare time, outside of church duties, to this all-absorbing question. Afterward, the stirring times of secession

and war brought this grand woman still more to the front, assuming duties which would aid the soldiers in their camp and hospital life.

To those in trouble Mrs. Beecher was a good angel, unbounded in sympathy and helpfulness, ignoring herself entirely in her efforts to bring right out of wrong or comfort to the sad hearted and discouraged.

As in all such strong, imperious natures, she loved with her whole being to the verge of selfishness.

On the other hand, her dislikes were just as violent and pronounced. The devotion to her husband was ever prominent and absorbing, so much so that it often took the form of jealousy.

She thought no human being ought or could do for him as she was able to, and when deprived of this was grieved and miserable.

Being of a practical turn of mind, it often took her a long time to get used to Mr. Beecher's jokes and teasing, of which he was very fond, but when the fun dawned on her she laughed and enjoyed it all as much as he did.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Beecher were devotedly fond of horses. Mrs. Beecher was not only a fearless rider, but could hold her own with most men in handling a spirited team of horses. Through Mr. Robert Bonner, Mr. Beecher became the owner of a team of small mares that were half-sisters to Dexter, a famous race horse, and nothing gave Mr. Beecher and his wife more pleasure than taking long drives from their place at Peekskill through the picturesque scenery of that region.

The late years of her life, since the death of her gifted husband, had been spent in her small, quiet home in

HOUSE WHERE
MRS. BEECHER WAS BORN

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher and Their
Great-Grandchildren.

Brooklyn, near Plymouth Church, close to children and grandchildren, satisfied with living over the past and taking what came to her of love and cheer from the old friends. The imperious independence of her character hung about the sick room, and it seemed as if the tremendous will power, which made her life such a strong element in the city where she lived, could not let go its hold, even when death hung near. With her children about her, surrounded by the love which she always craved from them, her busy life ended. Her influence and the influence of women like her will not end so easily.

Harriet B. Beecher



AT 85.

From Mrs. Beecher's last photograph.